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DE RUEHLG #0877/01 3301508
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 261508Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4825
INFO RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 2671
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 2567
RUEHOR/AMEMBASSY GABORONE 0755
RUEHSB/AMEMBASSY HARARE 1425
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 6418
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LILONGWE 000877

SIPDIS

AIDAC

USAID FOR DCHA/FFP PETERSEN, TAYLOR
USAID FOR DCHA/OFDA ISAACS, GOTTLIEB, MARX, PRATT
USAID FOR AFR/SA LOKEN, COPSON
DEPT FOR AF/S, INR/GGI, PM/ISP
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NAIROBI FOR ESTES, DEPREZ
GABORONE FOR BROWN, KHUPE
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SUBJECT: MALAWI SITUATION REPORT NUMBER XX - DISASTER ALERT

REF: LILONGWE - REPORT ON FLOODS/HAIL STORM IN SOUTHERN MALAWI

11. (U) SUMMARY: The first floods and hail storms of this rainy season are reported to have occurred between November 7-16 in seven districts: Chikwawa, Nsanje, Phalombe, Mwanza, Mangochi and Machinga in southern Malawi, and Mzimba in the north. According to the Department of Poverty and Disaster Management Affairs (DoPDMA) an estimated 1,309 households have been affected with loss of houses, roads and food items. However, the DoPDMA has indicated that most of the damage is the result of the hail storm and not due to flooding and has dispatched food items to the effected areas as of November 17, 2007. END SUMMARY

12. (U) GOM EFFORTS: The households affected by the recent floods and hail storms require food assistance, and the DoPDMA indicated that food items would be dispatched to Nsanje, Chikwawa and Phalombe starting from November 17, 2007. The DoPDMA has made arrangements to draw maize supplies from the nearest Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) depots in the affected districts to facilitate immediate and timely response.

13. (U) CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO EMERGENCY: There is currently 61,500MT in the Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) for emergency food aid that can be drawn down and replenished.

4 (U) IO/NGO EFFORTS: The United Nations (UN) is closely monitoring the developments with the DoPDMA and field officers, and will be ready to come in with the necessary support to fill up any gaps upon request, and the Country Representative of the World Food Program (WFP) in Malawi indicated that the situation under control. Post will continue to monitor this current situation through consultations with GoM and partners in the affected area, and will report further should the situation deteriorate or the GoM make a request for assistance.

15. (U) HEALTH CONCERNS: No cases of cholera have been reported.

6 (U) WEATHER OUTLOOK: The recent weather forecasts by the Southern African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (SARCOF), NOAA, GFCSA, and

the Malawi National Meteorological Service all agree that Malawi has a high chance of receiving normal to above-normal rainfall in the southern and part of the central regions from January to March 2008.

If these predictions prove accurate, the chances of flooding and water-logged conditions in the most flood prone districts (Nsanje, Chikwawa, Karonga, Mwanza, Phalombe, Mangochi, Nkhata Bay, and Salima) are significantly increased. It should be noted however, that floods occur every year in Southern Malawi, especially in the districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa, which are located in the flood plains of the lower Shire valley. The Government of Malawi (GoM) has initiated a campaign to try and move households located in these flood plains to areas of higher elevation. Nonetheless, these weather predictions call for preparedness of all stakeholders to respond effectively and timely as the needs arrive.

17. (U) POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF FLOODING IN JANUARY-MARCH 2008:

Generally, December is a very critical month in the early development stage of the maize crop in Malawi. By this time, the maize would be approximately 30cm high and is very fragile to any shocks. Flooding during this period can potentially wash away the maize crop and require replanting later. A continuous above normal rainfall from December 2007 or January through March 2008 also poses a high risk of leaching of both organic and inorganic plant nutrients. The GoM is in the process of distributing fertilizer and send coupons in readiness for the upcoming agricultural season, and any above normal rainfall during this period could potentially water down the fertilizer that may have been applied to the crop, thus effectively reducing the impact of the fertilizer and other input investments. In addition, excess rainfall during this critical period can potentially lead to water-logging and yellowing of the maize crop, which can drastically reduce crop yield and effect the food security situation for the next consumption year. This is not to mention the risk of loss of lives, household property,

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livelihood, and infrastructure that may result from any flooding among the affected population.

18. (U) PREPARATIONS TO DATE FOR POSSIBLE FLOODING: The UN and the Red Cross have been updating their flood contingency plans in Malawi since September 2007 on the basis of "Scenario 2" flooding assumptions. Scenario 2 assumes that localized flooding will occur as a result of heavy rainfall, but that this would be limited to a relatively short period averaging 2-3 weeks. Scenario 2 also assumes that an average of 15,000 households (equivalent to 83,000 individuals) spread out across the districts of Chikwawa, Karonga, Machinga, Mangochi, Nsanje, Salima and Zomba, are likely to be affected by flooding. While the district list is not exhaustive, those districts mentioned above are felt to be the most vulnerable and likely to be worst affected should a flood occur. Areas of the flood contingency plan that have been updated include: 1) Contact details for all disaster focal points in the GoM at all levels, UN Disaster Management Technical Working Group, NGOs, and field-based staff; 2) Information on in-country emergency stocks, their locations and quantities; 3) Information on what each Agency (UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, WHO, Red Cross Movement, and WFP) has planned at Agency level in relation to how it will assist towards responding to a possible flood disaster; and, 4) Annual Work Plan, bearing in mind lessons from the 2007 review meeting.

19. (U) USAID officer Mark Visocky is the Mission's Disaster Relief Officer. He can be reached at 265-1-772-455 (office), 265-9-960-020 (mobile)

EASTHAM